

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Colville National Forest
765 S. Main Street, Colville, WA 99114, www.fs.usda.gov/colville

Contact: Franklin Pemberton, 509.684.7177

September 10, 2015

Firewood Cutting, Access and Fire Danger on the Colville N.F.

Colville, WA - With fall just around the corner many are planning visits to the Colville National Forest to hunt in their favorite spot or cut firewood in areas they have in the past. With the fires that remain on the landscape and the necessary emergency area closures, visitors may need to modify their plans and look into new areas to do these activities on the forest. The majority of the forest is open to visitors, and despite the large fires we have had, there is far more green forest than burned on the landscape.

As of Thursday, Sept. 10, 2015 the Industrial Fire Precaution Level will be lowered to IFPL2. This means firewood cutters may cut with Hoot Owl restrictions. IFPL2 is more commonly known as "Hoot Owl" wood cutting restrictions. Hoot Owl is a historic term used to notify woodcutters of elevated fire danger and to only cut in the morning hours when you can hear Hoot Owls. This has developed into the modern policy of no chainsaws running in the woods after 1:00 p.m. The restriction is in place to reduce the risk of an accidental fire start by mechanical equipment during the hottest and driest part of the day. A long handled shovel and a pressurized chemical fire extinguisher not less than 8 oz. in capacity is required by all permit holders. Be sure to monitor the area for one hour after cutting to ensure no spark has been fanned to a flame.

Even with the cooler temperatures and the latest rain, conditions are still very dry. Many of the finer fuels (grasses, etc.) have gone dormant with the extremely dry weather we have had. Since these fuels have not received a long enough duration of wetting rain, they have not revived – basically that means they are not absorbing the moisture internally and any moisture on them is external and will evaporate as the warm dry weather returns. We remain in Phase 2 Fire Restrictions, no fires, campfires or charcoal fires allowed. We will evaluate fire restrictions on the forest next week, but until then we will enforce our current restrictions.

Many areas that were closed due to large fire activity and fire suppression efforts are now opening back up. Forest and fire managers are continuing to assess and mitigate hazards in each of these temporary area closures daily and will determine when it is appropriate to reopen areas that are currently closed. Recent moisture and cooler temperatures has reduced the fire activity and spread for now, but warmer weather could cause hot-spots to flare up and increase the smoke in the interior of burned areas. These changing conditions make it particularly important for forest visitors to be aware of their surroundings and their proximity to the wildfires or burned areas. Many hazards still exist in burned areas such as burned-out trees (or snags) that may fall at any time, stump holes, deep hot ash, and unstable soils causing rolling debris. Due to these hazards, as well as ongoing fire suppression and rehabilitation activities some area closures may remain in place through the spring.

-MORE-



for the greatest good

NEWS RELEASE
Continued

As with most firefighting efforts, heavy equipment is used to create fire lines and breaks. While some of these new “dozer lines” in the forest may appear like road or trails, these areas remain closed to motorized use. Visitors should refer to the forest’s Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) when traveling on forest roads. A free map can be picked up at your local district office or downloaded at www.fs.usda.gov/colville

For more information on a specific area, including maps and closure orders, please visit the Colville National Forest homepage located at www.fs.usda.gov/colville or contact your local ranger district office.

-END-

The mission of the US Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Recreational activities on our lands contribute \$14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world.



for the greatest good